



NEWS RELEASE

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Utahns Say “Truth” Campaign is Making a Difference

Salt Lake City, Feb. 19, 2003 – The efforts of the Utah Department of Health’s (UDOH) Tobacco Prevention and Control Program (TPCP) are paying off with lives saved, improved quality of life, reduced medical care costs, and youths prevented from using tobacco.

TPCP Program Manager Heather Borski says, “In addition to our data that shows our Truth About Tobacco campaign has been effective, we are now hearing from Utahns that have been positively affected by the work we are doing. We have found that tobacco affects most of us in one way or another, as we are gleaning personal stories from the Truth campaign’s ‘I Did It’ web site and Utah Tobacco Quit Line, along with youth, teachers, health workers, loved ones of smokers and many other sources.”

One story comes from Eugene Delgado of Kearns, a smoker who sought help from the Quit Line. “I personally think the tobacco industry and lobbyists go way too far. You see cigarette ads everywhere,” says Delgado. “Now they say they’re discouraging kids from smoking, but it looks to me like they are trying to get them more involved in smoking. I’m glad that Utah is taking steps to fight back.”

Murray High School Teacher Crystal Spackman uses UDOH’s “Truth from Youth” anti-tobacco advertising contest as part of her curriculum and calls it “the most authentic classroom assignment” she asks her students to complete.

Teachers are using the contest as an opportunity to connect classroom learning to real-world experiences. “As far as a ‘school to work’ process, from idea to fruition, there is not a more complete process than this contest,” says Spackman. “Not only that, the idea of [students] encouraging their peers to either stop smoking or never to start is a real and positive process that I fully support. I applaud the effort. They have helped kids to either stop smoking or not to start in the first place.”

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“The tobacco industry aggressively markets its products to Utah’s lower-income adults, youth and other vulnerable populations. These are the people that can least afford the cost of tobacco products and related medical costs but by the time they realize that they are addicted and the Quit Line is the only effective cessation program available to them,” says Borski.

Now in its sixth year, UDOH’s multi-pronged media campaign targets prevention and cessation among mainstream and high-risk youth, adults, pregnant women, Native Americans, Hispanics and Latinos, college students, rural populations and worksites. UDOH is working to counteract the \$65 million spent by tobacco companies marketing to Utahns and to reduce the \$273 million burden the state incurs annually in smoking related medical costs. Each 5 percent decline in Utah’s adult smoking rates means 9,000 fewer smokers, 3,000 lives saved and \$73 million dollars saved in medical care costs.

Though TPCP’s budget is less than half of what the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends for an effective campaign based on the evidence of what works, the program has still been successful. Results from the 2002 campaign include:

- 13,000 Utahns called the Tobacco Quit Line, at 1-888-567-TRUTH.
- 3,580 smokers used Quit Line referral or quit services.
- 1,300 smokers participated in local cessation services.
- Quit rates ranged from 25-30 percent (higher than the national average).
- More than 95 percent of Utah middle school students report that they will not use tobacco in the future.
- 20,000 students in grades 5 to 8 participated in proven anti-tobacco curricula.
- 13,000 students (K-12) statewide created anti-tobacco ads for the “Truth from Youth Anti-tobacco Advertising Contest”.

“As proud as we are of these accomplishments there is still more to do. Only a small fraction of grade 5-8 students are receiving a proven anti-tobacco curriculum. In times of state budget woes, it is important for us to stay the course and continue going head to head with the tobacco companies to counter the health and economic effects of their marketing and products. That’s what the tobacco lawsuit was all about,” says Borski. “Though we have what might be considered a shoestring budget by many other states, we run a lean and highly effective operation.”

To Utahns like Delgado, TPCP’s programs hit a very personal note. “I started smoking when I was a kid because all the ad hype made cigarettes seem very cool,” says Delgado. “I’m glad the Quit Line is there.” Delgado is taking advantage of the state’s services in his effort to quit successfully.

UDOH is encouraging anyone who has been affected by tobacco use or the state’s anti-tobacco programs to send their stories via e-mail to truth@crowelladv.com.